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President's Conference Issue... Oregon Reads: One State, Many Stories

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President's Conference Issue ...

Oregon Reads: One State, Many Stories

"And now the old story has begun to write itself over there," said Carl softly. "Isn't it queer: there are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before; like the larks in this country, that have been singing the same five notes for thousands of years."

Willa Cather
O Pioneers!
1913

Were you reminded of Willa Cather's quotation when you heard the OLA conference theme Oregon Reads: One State, Many Stories? In this year when the Oregon Library Association ignited reading and discussion statewide through the Oregon Reads program, the importance of stories in identifying patterns resonates in that quotation and in that theme. With no lessening of the uniqueness of each individual's story, exposure to many stories summons us to speak of our commonalities and learn from our histories. "So attention must be paid" to quote Linda Loman in *Death of a Salesman*.

The consciousness-raising about prejudice toward immigrants that *Stubborn Twig* fostered is mirrored in the selected excerpts about Oregon's passage of the Equal Rights Amendment by Betty Roberts and Gail Wells. Betty Roberts keynoted at the 2009 OLA Conference and told stories from her legislative and judicial career that are

important to remember. Our present-day workplaces and our lives are better due to the movements of recent history with which Betty and others worked. Betty's stories are rich with lessons about collaboration, consensus, and compromise as illustrated in her memories of the E.R.A. in Oregon. One of the repeated human stories is that patterns of prejudice can be overcome, often assisted by the passage of civil rights statutes.

Patterns of a different nature are sorted out by Robert Hulshof-Schmidt in his article analyzing the 2009 Conference evaluations. Robert's experience with many conferences is evident in his recommendations for future conferences, advice to get involved, and recognition of Oregon's collegial library association.

Proving that the larks in Ukraine sing the same five notes, Maya Tarasova's account of her Sister City visit to the United States of America, Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, and the OLA conference virtually hums with international optimism. Relief and pride that libraries in our two countries share core principles can be heard throughout this piece.

Kim Marsh Read helps us enter the patterned and often solitary world of children with autism. Recounting her learnings from a program at the OLA Conference Kim shares the advice of therapists and a mom about how libraries can better provide service and a welcoming environment to these children.

Improving service to another often misunderstood and underserved group is the subject of my dialogue with Heydi Smith. Heydi had her first OLA conference experience when she attended the "Got Teens?" preconference. Heydi's perspective on the preconference, what she learned, and how she applied what she learned is an example of the cycle of learning we've all undergone at conferences.

Two personal stories of "how I came to work in libraries" by Margaret Harmon-Myers and Bonnie Carolee Hirsch share the pattern of early library use that did not stir interest in the profession despite a love of reading. Follow their career detours to the present where both Margaret and Carolee are library employees engaged in serving the public.

Lauren Kessler's paean exulting in Oregon's readers rounds out the President's issue. Heartened by the fact of "one state, many readers" Lauren brings us back to the compelling theme and pattern of stories "about the power of stories in our lives, about how stories can tell us who we are and who we were." So attention must be paid ...

Guest Editor

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P.S. Please see well-deserved recognition of the Oregon Reads Committee, donors, and partners on the last page of this issue.